

Donald Kenyon Ag '17 was born May 22, 1895, in Adams, in New York. Growing up in Adams, in Jefferson county prepared Don well for Ithaca: Adams sits on the eastern, windward shore of Lake Ontario and gets 171 rainy days a year, compared to Ithaca's 162, 34 snow days to Ithaca's 24, but 114 inches of snow to Ithaca's 82.

That said, he was the son of Charles Henry Kenyon (1870-1919) and Caddie Estella Totman (1871- ). Don had a younger sister, Doris (1911-1979). Don's father was a bookkeeper, probably with the town bank, of which his brother Frank S. Canyon (1867-1919) was the president, as well as Deputy Superintendent of all New York state banks. The uncle Frank was remembered for many years after his death in an accidental misunderstanding with a railroad locomotive as one of the county's ablest politicians.

At Cornell, Don was active in the Cornell Masonic Club.

Just before graduating from Cornell<sup>1</sup>, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US Marine Corps Reserve, on April 16, 1917.

While on duty with the Marines, and four days before the Armistice, he found time to marry Ruth M. Overton (1898-1940) on November 7, 1918. She was a music teacher. Their son Floyd was born in 1925.

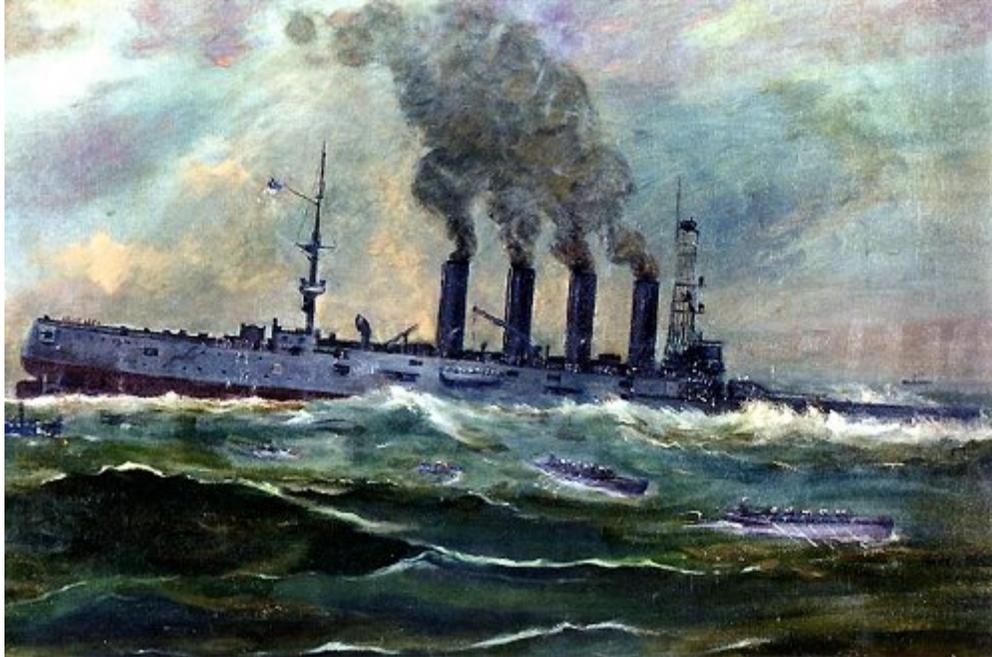
By late May, 1917 he undertook further training at Quantico Marine Barracks, and was assigned to duty on the USS San Diego, an armored cruiser, on December 21, 1917.

The San Diego has an interesting history, having originally been built in 1908 and made a key component of the "Great White Fleet" intended to demonstrate American power and prestige. In 1912, she was dispatched to Nicaragua, and later patrolled the western coast of Mexico. Put on reserve, the ship was made fully operational again on April, 1917, serving as the flagship of the Commander of the US Pacific Fleet. Initially, its mission was to contain the German outposts in the Pacific. But by July, the ship was reassigned to duty in the Atlantic, to provide escort to cargo and warships on their first dangerous leg of the voyage from the United States to Europe. She escorted all of her charges successfully.

However, on July 8, 1918, with our Don Kendall now just six months on board, a boiler explosion ignited one of her magazines, and two other secondary explosions ripped her hull open. After only 28 minutes, the ship was abandoned, capsized, and sunk six miles off Long Island's south shore, where it remains today in about 1,000 feet of water.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Cape Vincent Eagle* of March 22, 1917, page 1, in its "Jefferson Briefs" column noted "Donald Kenyon, of Adams, senior at Cornell, will go to Washington soon to enter the physical examination for the position as second lieutenant in the Marine Corps." One month later, on April 19, the same column noted "Donald Kenyon ... has passed the examination for a second lieutenancy in the United States Marine Corps and has received his commission. Junior officers in this branch receive \$1,700 per year. The tests ... are difficult ones and Mr. Kenyon's many friends will watch his career with interest."



The Sinking of the USS San Diego. It was the only major American ship lost in World War I. The final after action report concluded that the initial explosion had been caused by a German mine.

Back home in Adams, Don's hometown newspaper, the Cape Vincent Eagle reported, "The sinking of the San Diego recently touched Adams a little more personally than any event in the war so far. Lieutenant Donald Kenyon and Harold Ramsey, of that village, were on the ship, and the friends of both were greatly relieved when a telegram came telling of their safety. Lieutenant Kenyon was in the water four hours before being picked up. He was fortunate in having returned to him later a pocketbook which he had left in his blouse and thrown aside when entering the water. The buttons had all been taken from the blouse as souvenirs."<sup>2</sup>

Don was promoted to first lieutenant on September 11, 1917, and to captain on September 6, 1918. On October 28, 1918, he was assigned to the USS North Dakota. The dreadnought class North Dakota's role in World War I was as a training ship. Don was honorably discharged on July 20, 1919, and he returned to Adams.

For the remainder of his working career, he remained in Adams as an independent insurance agent. He was also very active as a member of his local Masonic Lodge, on the Boy Scouts' Jefferson-Lewis Council's finance committee, particularly in their annual fund raising drives, and in the American Legion. In the latter organization, he served as its county commander from 1927 to 1933, and was a frequent delegate to its state conventions.

Don died on March 11, 1966 in St. Petersburg, Florida.

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<sup>2</sup> *Cape Vincent Eagle*, July 30, 1918, page 1, column 6.